

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office

February 3, 2000 LB 729

County to challenge an initiative or referendum petition once those signed petitions have been filed with the Secretary of State. In other words, around that July 4th date or whenever it is, the actual date that those petitions are filed. The district court may then declare a petition should not be on the ballot because it is not legally sufficient. Difficulty arises from the fact that the district court case must be filed, heard and decided all within a brief, four-month period. Little or no time is left or available for appeals to the Court of Appeals or the Nebraska Supreme Court. Adding to the difficulty is the fact that a challenger of a petition must continue his or her political challenge of the measure at the same time the matter is in court. Millions of dollars may be spent during that time on a measure that may or may not be legally sufficient. This proposal addresses the situation this way, rather than to wait to initiate a court challenge until after all the signatures have been collected and only four months remain until the general election, let's just move the time for the court challenge up in time; let's move it forward. Bear in mind, that before petitions are circulated they are first submitted to the Secretary of State and to the Revisor's Office so the basic language of the petition can be reviewed for stylistic reasons. And actually, we passed that provision several years ago in this body. The proponents of a petition are given suggestions to make the petition clearer and more compatible with the constitution, and then they circulate the petitions. AM2005 uses this event as the point in time for a court challenge. It creates a new cause of action and permits any resident of the state to file suit in the District Court of Lancaster County at any time, once it is first filed with the Secretary of State for that stylistic review. And I think, in most cases, they're going to want to wait and see if the people circulating decide to change the language of the petition after that stylistic review. But that's when it starts, once it's filed for that review. Most importantly, AM2005 permits the circulation of the petition while the court challenge is ongoing. This means that petition proponents can continue their work to prepare for getting their petition on the ballot of the general election. Now, there is a second difficulty addressed by AM2005. Let's say these petitions have been filed with the Secretary of State, a suit has been filed in the district court, the case is ongoing, and petition circulators are in the process of